

THE  
**Final  
Straw**  
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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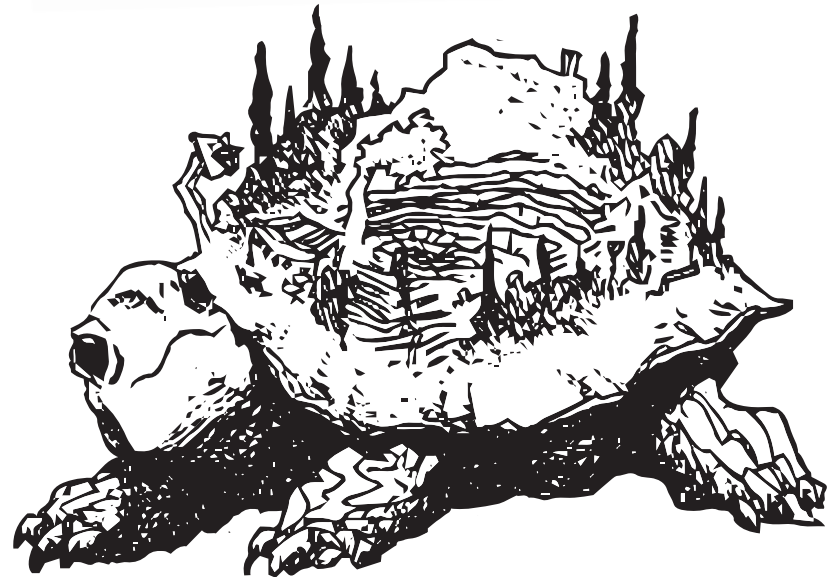
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FIGHTING BACK  
AGAINST  
DISPLACEMENT  
IN GREECE



**The Final Straw Radio**  
**Aug 8, 2022**

This week, we spoke with Alex, an anarchist squatter in the Athenian neighborhood of Exarchia. They talk about repression by the New Democracy party, struggles against green washing wind turbines around rural Greece, the fires raging through the country, resistance to rape culture, fighting against the building of a metro station in Exarchia and the privatization of public spaces like Strefi Hill, police presence at Universities, anarcho-tourism and the hunger strike of anarchist prisoner Giannis Michialidas.

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I don't know. It's kind of weird because sometimes we feel like we're in a zoo. A lot of people are just coming here to see us, they don't participate, they are just curious, and they just are watching us do all this stuff. It's kind of an amusement for a lot of people, what we do, and we really try to explain that it's not fun. It's not amusement, you should not be curious to watch what we do here. If you want, you can come and join our struggle here and contact the local assemblies. Somebody can host you, somebody can find a way people want to support the struggle. There are ways for people to come and join. But if people just want to come and have fun, we don't like this.

So to me, if you're abroad, a good tactic is to say to your friends, "Don't go there, if you don't go there to struggle. Don't go there to consume. Don't go there to participate in the Greek industry of tourism."

**TFSR: Yeah! Okay. Alex, was there anything that I didn't ask about or anything else that you want to mention?**

**Alex:** I just want to mention that now it's really a high point of resistance. In August, I think we will see a lot of things, bad and good. Repression, but also a lot of fight back. From September, I don't know how Exarchia will look like, what will be happening. People can follow our media and get informed. Of course, we are open to exchange ideas with other people on gentrification or to connect struggles around the world because, of course, this thing that happens here is it's happening everywhere, as you said before. And also with the Atlanta forest occupation, I think it was very important to learn about it in the defense of our hill, and we can find a lot of common things and get empowered from this struggle.

Yes, and I really hope we can win and we can spread some solidarity, to your struggles and to other struggles around the globe.

**TFSR: Awesome. Thank you very much for taking the time to have this conversation. Yeah, of course.**

**Alex:** Thank you so much. I hope you have a good day!

**TFSR: Thanks, you too.**

for the students and for the rest of the movements. They want to stop it in any possible way.

**TFSR: It's worth noting that Syriza was a 'center left party' that was touted by a lot of progressives and leftists in the West. And also that New Democracy, was just sort of a reformulation of a lot of the leadership that was around during the dictatorship and that ruled for a long time after the fall of the dictatorship, right?**

**Alex:** Yes, Syriza was a left wing government that popped out because of the mass movements that emerged in Greece. But of course, we don't have any hope in this government, of course. It was very bad in a lot of ways, and they did a lot of repression to squats, to people, and to migrants. It's very important to note that the leftist government doesn't mean 'haven' or 'utopia.'

**TFSR: So, how can anarchists and anti authoritarian anti-capitalists support the resistance to gentrification in Exarchia from far away? Because definitely for the city that I live in, the struggles look different, but a lot of the components are similar in terms of AirBnB, or VRBO, or further privatization or monetization of spaces and the pressure that those put on the government here to make the town less about the people that live here, but more for the investors and for the people that are here for a weekend to get drunk and crazy. So there's a lot of commonalities. Maybe there's ways that people in solidarity can strike locally and help support the struggle in Exarchia? For those people that are traveling, are there better ways for them to visit Athens or Exarchia? Or what would be a better approach than just trying to get a hotel room or an AirBnB?**

**Alex:** I would say that, maybe I'm a bit harsh, but if somebody wants to come to Exarchia or Athens for a week, not to come, really. If people don't want to come to join the struggle and be here with us, I don't see a reason for them to come. We're really open to international comrades. We have a lot of international comrades that are staying in Athens. It's not about localism or some sort of hatred towards other people. It's really that if you come here for a week, for a weekend, people usually, even if they have good will, they don't have other solutions other than to stay in AirBnBs or hostels and or to pay expensive shit.

**TFSR: Would you please introduce yourself to the audience with whatever name, preferred pronouns, location, political position, or however you feel will help give the audience a sense of who they're listening to.**

**Alex:** Hi, my name is Alex. I use they pronouns. I live in Athens, Greece. I'm a squatter, and I'm involved in anarchist and social movements in the neighborhood.

**TFSR: So first up, Greece, like many other places in southern Europe has faced terrible fires this year, a growing pattern alongside a terrible heatwave. I hope that you've been doing okay with this. I would like, if you could, to talk about climate change and your views on the role of capitalism in this. Have you seen mutual aid projects work to navigate the high temperatures and dangerous air quality where you're at?**

**Alex:** In the center of Athens, we don't experience fires right now. It's mostly in the mountains around Athens and in different parts of Greece and the islands. But this year, the fires, even if they're very big, the media are trying a bit to not show them so much because they want to hide all these very big catastrophes. Last year, it was very important with the fires in Evia Island, which burned a huge amount of forests, like almost the 1/3 of the island. It's the second biggest island in Greece. So, it's big.

The fires here has to do a lot with capitalistic projects and money, they want to use the burned land for different kinds of businesses. They really don't care about any laws or any natural environment issues. There are a lot of ecological struggles in Greece, against the wind turbines or against the mining in different parts of Greece. And of course, it's a big plan. I think they're experimenting with different capitalistic ways of how they will control and how they will use all of this burned land. Because we are speaking about a lot of burned land in Evia Island.

It's unclear how exactly they want to use all of this land, but for sure we know because of the local people, is that when the fire starts, the states don't want to put it out. This is a big scandal. The state is letting this fires burn everything and destroy people's land. It's really crazy how it's happening. I don't know what more specific, maybe you would like to hear about all the situation.

There is a lot of mutual aid for needs of the people, or for rescuing animals, or for taking out the fires, more self organized. We can see that

the people in Evia, or in other places and in villages and communities, they put out the fire themselves. The States don't care. Firefighters have very precise [orders], they tell them not to take out the fire. I don't know if you want something more specific?

**TFSR: Yeah. Is the land all private parcels of property? Or is it State property that once it is held by the State and then once it's destroyed, the state says, "well, we can't use this for anything. Let's sell it." So kind of a primitive accumulation option? How does the disaster capitalism of this fire sale thing actually work out for the State.**

**Also, people may be surprised to hear critiques of wind turbines. Could you share some of the concerns around those that people have?**

**Alex:** Yes, they land it can be private property of people that live by agricultural work. In Greece still, in the smaller towns or in the villages, people live by growing stuff or by the forest. They live by the forest with different ways that they use forest material to live out of it. In a kind of old fashioned way, let's say. So with destroying big forests, the State destroys natural environment, animals, and also the way that people can survive and live off it. So the people are pushed either to go to the cities, because they cannot live anymore in a village in a more natural environment or in more communal environment, or they are pushed to work in the next businesses that are going to these areas to take profit out of it. It's not very clear what exactly they want to do. For example, they want to make maybe some more touristic areas out of burned land, some alternative tourism, some wind turbines, or some industries. It's a lot of options what they want to do out of this land. It's too new, it's very fresh, these catastrophes, to know exactly.

A lot of big businesses and construction businesses are involved in all this situation. They call it the 'new forest,' they want to make new kinds of forests like less wild, more controlled, more open for tourists that cannot go to a real forest. So it's a lot of experiment, I would say, between the Greek State and very big, private companies. So we will see how it will turn out.

About wind turbines, I know that I have heard from other comrades around the world that this is not really a thing in other countries to struggle against. But here, it's really, really strong struggles against the wind turbines. You can see small islands that get full of them, and it's really bad for the local inhabitants. You can see places in Greece that it's may-

from there, or to squat. The university movements have been also very huge in the past. There have been great movements, like in 2006 or 2007. So the Greek University, it's a very political space. The leftist more communist and Leninist people and political parties, they also have big power and influence in the universities. Every university has a lot of leftists, people from the communist party, and I would say at least one squatted place for more self organized and more anarchist ideas.

The main events, the assemblies, the parties, the raves, the concerts, the events, festivals, everything would take space there. In almost all of the universities in Athens and Thessaloniki, of course, and in every city that there is some movement or some students, the universities are active. So, it is a very public space. The university campuses, some of them are very big, and people just go there and play and have fun or people of the neighborhoods are also using these big campuses. It's a very social and public space.

So, the asylum, I would say it's a social contract. If the society's opinion would allow cops to enter, the cops would enter. All these years a lot of times cops have entered the universities. But they would say it's the shame for them to enter. It's not good politically for the government.

But the propaganda also from the Syriza government was very tense against the criminality of the universities, against the rioters that destroy everything, and "they squat the university all the time", and "the university is not normal," that there is criminality and drug dealing and a lot of things. So, the Syriza government created this image of how bad the Greek University is, so when New Democracy came to power, the first thing they did was to stop the law for university asylum law. Of course, this, as I said before, has a lot to do with social acceptance. It's not that the cops in Athens enter the university all the time, I would say this year they entered the Athens universities around three times, maybe four times? But in Thessaloniki it is way, way more tense. The second biggest city in Greece.

The government is planning for a 'university police,' a special police force that will be only in the universities and to guard them. There hasn't yet been any big struggles against it, it hasn't yet been made. Also, the law says stuff about cameras and to check your ID before you enter the university. All this goes together with a kind of privatization of the public education, which has a lot of parts in it, and contains a lot of money for the government to make the universities like a business. So, basically, they want to stop the resistance and the organizing that happens in universities

**Alex:** Yes. I don't really know what this can mean. Because in his announcement, there was some vague parts where he said that he cannot really explain why he stopped, or puts on pause, the hunger strike. So I guess we will see, we will find out. But yeah, he said it's on pause. I don't know what this means, or pause until when? I don't know. But I think for sure, it means that the struggle for his liberation is not over.

**TFSR:** So would you speak about the position of police in relation to universities, the role of these spaces for debate? You've already sort of talked about how the Polytechnic and closing the building was annoying, to the least, to assemblies that would have been using the space who now have to do it outside. But allowing police onto campuses is a relatively new technique that the government has been taking that has sort of been off of the books for a number of decades because of the memories of the dictatorship and the murders in Exarchia, and elsewhere.

Can you talk a bit about the role of the university as a public space, not just as a private space that people who pay to go to it like a private university in the United States would experience and what are the motivations of New Democracy in this?

**Alex:** Yes, the universities in Greece are public. There are also some private ones, but they don't have this same situation, let's say. So public universities are also kind of accessible for a lot of people to attend. There are a lot of student rights that have been won through the very strong movements, after the fall of dictatorship. One of the rights that we had, is called the 'university asylum'. It's a law that is not allowing the presence of police inside the universities. Of course, this law has been changed a lot of times, it's complicated, I don't even know how to explain all of the changes that has happened all these years. All this to say that the cops were entering, but only sometimes, like in extreme times, let's say, something very bad...

**TFSR:** Like someone's being attacked, or something like that? "I need to go in and resolve this," sort of thing?

**Alex:** Not really. This not enough. It's a political decision to put cops to stop something in a university. But in general, universities were used the for attacking the cops. They are a place that cops couldn't enter. So you could use them as a place to attack the cops, or to hide, or to start the riots

be a small village and on top of the mountain and just next to it, you see a lot of wind turbines that of course, maybe the energy they are producing is not even going back to the local residents. So there's really not any pro's for them.

Also, the struggles against wind turbines are usually by local people. They don't want to see the nature around the villages and get totally destroyed. They don't want the animals to get kicked out. They don't want the birds to be hurt by the wind turbines. They don't want these very big companies to get profit and get full money off of their backs and destroy the natural place. I think they're a more ecological movement in Greece. I think the opinion is that wind turbines... it's like greenwashing, let's say. It's not a real innovation. It's not something that is helping our class. It's doing more damage than good, and it's used for profit and for saying, "Ah look, we do something good!" But they destroy the lives of the locals.

And also with the wind turbines, the places that they decide to put them is places where people live. And also really natural forests. For example, there was there was a lot of natural places in Greece that with a new law of the government, they are not being protected anymore from the State. So, amazing natural treasures are not protected anymore, and they will be used for profits. For example, you can see the local struggles in the Tinos Island or Andros Island. It's really amazing how the people there resist and self organize and how heavy are the repressions they also get.

I don't know I think it's very interesting and I think there are also links in English for people to to read more good analysis on this. topic from the people In the fight against it.

**TFSR:** So you're involved in the squatting movement in the Athens neighborhood of Exarchia, as I understand. Many listeners will be at least passingly familiar with the context there. But for those who aren't, can you give a brief rundown of the legacy of counter-cultural and anti authoritarian struggles in that neighborhood through the dictatorship, it's importance in the rebellion since December 2008, in the wake of the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos, and increasing neoliberal austerity since?

**Alex:** This neighborhood, Exarchia neighborhood, is in the center of Athens. It has always been kind of center of political struggle, of a wide political spectrum. It has been a political place even before the dictatorship, but

it's too old to analyze this. The thing is that this neighborhood is situated between universities. So it always has been placed with a lot of young people and artists and more cultured people, not really a full working class neighborhood. It's a lie to say that it's always been the working class neighborhood.

On the 17th of November 1973, there was a big revolt at the Polytechnic University that is in in this neighborhood, where the students and workers revolted against the dictatorship here. This was a really, really, really big event of the recent Greek history, with a lot of deaths of students from the military, and a big fight for... let's say, democracy or a lot of things that are more free. A lot of rights of the people were won, back then, after the fall of the dictatorship.

Polytechnic University has always been a center of struggle for the anarchist movement and leftist movements, a center of riots, a center of organizing, a very lively space of every day, very strong political activities. A lot of other events have happened there, repression, also another murder in '85, another 15 year old comrade from cops.

Anyway, this neighborhood has always been somehow a center of counterculture, of ideas, of the first squatting movement in Greece in the 80's and 90's. A lot of things can be said, and in 2008, there was the murder of the 15 year old anarchists and student, Alexis Grigoropoulos in the neighborhood from cops. After this, a very big insurrection broke out that started the same night and continued for almost a month, in Athens and in all of Greece. In every city, there was revolt, riots and squatting of public spaces and protesting for it.

It turned out that people were protesting for everything that was repressing them at this time. We can say that this murder was a spark to to start this flame of the people. And yes, Athens and Greece had very big movements also after 2008, 2012, and 2013 with austerity measures. 2008 played a very big role also for people to organize. You can see that a lot of self organized spaces or groups or political things were started then, and have stayed until now.

But for sure Exarchia neighborhood has been through a lot of phases. It's also very important not to romanticize it. It's very important to give a clear image of this neighborhood and not to make it sound like the place of anarchy or the place of utopia. Of course, it's a place with capitalism. It's a place with commercial relations. It's a place with bourgeois people. It's a lot of things. We should not romanticize it as a neighborhood.

also for the other political prisoners and the other prisoners that are in bad situations in the Greek prison. He did this hunger strike in order to try to move the movements and act more actively in all the social political and other strategies.

The hunger strike was 67 days. During these days, there were a lot of actions, a lot of demos, a lot of attacks, a lot of interventions in political issues. It's a big struggle, a lot of things were going on. We were waiting for the final decision of the court, this last stage that could decide on him and on the 66th day, the decision came out and it was negative. So this was really enraging for a big part of the society. Also, if you put together the story of all these rapists, and murderers that get released so quickly and so easily, at the same time that this comrade is dying because of the hunger strike, it's even more enraging to see that the justice system is really corrupted.

The last days, he was really bad situation, even though the movement was growing stronger and stronger, and the struggle was finally getting more attention because the media was really trying to hide it for a long time. There was big demos and cops were attacking our demos and but there was pay back for them. In more and more social parts of the society and more people were taking a clear position to support the Giannis Michailidas, but I think the whole movements were a bit too late. All this support should have started kind of earlier, because his situation of health was really turning very bad.

**TFSR: So he was denied release, or he is being denied release so far, under an argument by the judge that is like 'preventative custody,' right? Because they he will go back and do the same things that put them into prison in the first place. But they are fine releasing people who have a history of rape, as if robbing a bank versus raping someone are comparable things somehow.**

**In terms of the wider movement and activating the political bases and movements....Last year, there was a hunger strike that actually lasted for 66 days, also of Dimitris Koufodinas, which also brought huge amounts of people out into the streets, right? So there's this kind of political culture in Greece, where people support their prisoners in a very active way, in a way that I find really inspiring and have not seen in a very long time in the United States. That's too bad that it didn't it didn't get the people out there when they needed to be. He's just putting it on pause for the moment, but maybe will recommence it?**

**Alex:** Yes. Or, for example, the murderer of Alexis Grigoropoulos got released and the murderers of Zackie Oh, the drag queen activist, their murderers were...

**TFSR: Murder in the jewelry shop?**

**Alex:** yes. They also got released. Some rapists that were in very high economical positions were also released, some actors too. This guy, the pedo-rapist, was the responsible of the National Theatre in Greece.

**TFSR: Like the head of it? Wow.**

**Alex:** Yes, the head of it.

**TFSR: That's a lot of power.**

**Alex:** Yes.

**TFSR: I'd like to also speak about the police in universities under New Democracy, but because you brought up the subject of of Giannis Michailidas, can you speak a bit about his case? He is tied in with a lot of the things that you've already spoken about, including the uprisings of 2008 and its aftermath. If you could talk about his hunger strike and how he is now that would be great.**

**Alex:** Yes. So Giannis has been imprisoned around 8 or 9 years. He has also escaped from prison for around one and a half year, but then was arrested again in 2019 or 20. He has been accused of robberies and has been arrested also in the past for a lot of anarchist actions, for ecological struggles, for a lot of issues. I would say that he is, to me, a really strong and important comrade, with his feats and his power, and that he never gave up. Even when he escaped, he continued the struggle and has done really, really important things.

So, legally he should have been allowed to get released from jail because he has done the three fifths of his jail time. It has been also a lot of months that this could have been possible, but they don't let him go. Legally he has done a lot of steps and for this separate procedure to go on, but they constantly are negative to his demand. So he decided as the last weapon to use his body to try to win this struggle, not only for him, but

**TFSR: That seems really important that you focus on not romanticizing it and on the commercialism. I know that a few travel guides published in English, when they're talking about Athens have a section specifically on Exarchia about how experimental, weird and exciting Exarchia is, "You should come and visit and go to these hostels and go to these restaurants and cafes and what have you." Not unlike Christinia up in Northern Europe. Tourism seems like an issue there. Yeah?**

**Alex:** Yes, right. Now we have a huge issue with tourism. In the past, it was more alternative tourism, or like "anarcho-tourism." Where people would come with the idea of, "Ah so nice, because graffiti is everywhere and I can smoke weed here or whatever, and see some riots!" Which was bad. But now we talk about a whole different new level of tourism. It's really, really commercial. The capital has really invested money in Exarchia. You can see a lot of Airbnbs everywhere popping up. A lot of people get kicked out of their houses. I think the local population has been, about half of it has left, people cannot pay rent anymore, or whole apartment buildings where people have been kicked out. So they can use all of it as a hotel or as a hostel. And big investors are coming to the neighborhood.

A lot of new shops are opening, fancy ones, more hipster, they're more expensive. It's a really, really big issue, the issue of gentrification of the neighborhood. It's bad by itself, this process of gentrifying in every neighborhood of the world. But here, one more reason why it's so bad, because it's destroying the main place of political organization. It's not only kicking out some people. Gentrification is used as a tool to stop any political action or any resistance from the locals for all the new projects that they want to build in this neighborhood.

**TFSR: You spoke about some of the history of resistance in the neighborhood and now discussing how it continues to act as a sort of core for activity around Athens. I wonder if you could talk about the situation of social spaces, and non legalized housing and squatting around the neighborhood today? What sort of spaces do you see? Who lives there? What social needs are provided for and how are they coordinated? I'm hoping to also hear not just about squats, but also social spaces like Strefi Hill.**

**Alex:** Yes, I don't want to let you down, but there's not really a squatting movement in Athens anymore in the center. Of course, there are squats.

Not only in Exarchia, in the whole of Athens, and probably there are more than a lot of other places in the world. They're also fully illegal, I mean that you don't do any process to have a squatting house or a political house, squatting, whatever. But really the New Democracy government when it came to power, one of the first things they did is to evict a lot of squats. So the this way of organizing through big open squats is not existing anymore. There are squats in a lot of different neighborhoods where people are organized there, but it's not so big as it used to be.

In the Exarchia there are a few squats left and housing squats, not public ones. But I would say it's not the main place of organizing. There are also social centers and social places where people can go and organize. And the main tool of organizing was Polytechnic University. The anarchist movement is working here by doing a lot of open assemblies for different topics. So you need a big open public space where everybody can gather, or that can gather from 50 to 200 people, for example. So universities, always were helping in this. But now the historical Polytechnic University is kind of taken out of our hands. We kind of lost it. We had a huge building there that was the center of of these open assemblies and all this organizing. They have completely taken out from us. It's hard to gather there, you gather there only on the outside, not in a building.

Exarchia square is also a public space where people can meet. The local cafes can also be place for organizing, and then the Hill, the parks, the public spaces. For example, now, because the universities are closed for the summer, all the assemblies are taking place in Strefi Hill, because it's a big place, it has a very big open amphitheater. People can meet there and organize from there. I don't know what else more specifically.

**TFSR: Yeah, in these assemblies that you're talking about, it's not a part of political culture in the United States where we're based out of, to have large assemblies. My understanding is that there is a history and a continuity of neighborhood assemblies or assemblies that come together in order to discuss or debate specific issues and take action in those areas. How much is that sort of an actual thing in Athens political organizing, is it that people from the whole neighborhood come out, or just interested parties, or just a political group?**

**Alex:** It depends on the issue, and on the time. It depends on a lot of factors. But this open assembly mindset is kind of a tool of the anarchist movement. Historically, people had this need to gather together after

**TFSR: I definitely want to ask about Giannis, who as I understand, put a stall or at least paused the hunger strike at a very rough time, his body was unable to digest water at that point from what I was hearing. But just while we're on the other subject, before we get to Giannis, with the anti rape demonstration, was the focus of it against a specific person that's alleged to have committed the rape? Or was it more like, "there's patriarchy in the society, we are demonstrating against it, let's all be strong and denounce and stop rapes from happening," what was the framing of it?**

**Alex:** There was an attempt of rape in the neighborhood, an attempt of rape in a small street of the neighborhood during the day, combined with stealing and attacking. And as we heard, there are other incidents in the same street of attempts of rape and attacking, probably from the same person. So, that was what the demonstration was about. Some groups, they were combining this incident with the mafia issue in Exarchia, because the guy that did the attack in the attempted rape, he's dealing with them or something like that in a shop by the square. So some of the groups have this thought that mafia-style or this business of selling weed or other drugs in the square can create patriarchal dynamics. For some protesters, this was also a reason to protest, and not only the rape attempt.

For me, rapists are a many. It's beyond that [instance]. I mean, there are anarchists rapists, there are family rapists, it's beyond that. To me, patriarchy is everywhere, and we should be against it in every kind of situation. But yes, it was more specific about this incident in the neighborhood. Patriarchy is really a big issue in Greece. In the last three days, there were three femicides. It's a huge issue and the cops stopped feminist people from demonstrating against these three femicides!

It's a very big issue that rapists that are also part of the New Democracy. They are friends of New Democracy, there are people with high positions in the government. They're also pedo-rapists that have very high positions in the system of Greece. Recently a lot of them are released and are free. So this makes us very angry. It really kills us and we try to protest against this justice system that is constantly supporting rapists.

**TFSR: So when you say that they were released, these were people that were affiliated with the New Democracy regime who were incarcerated, and who were known to be rapists, who New Democracy has released, right?**

and from the companies to start the seeing what the hill looks and what they will gentrify and stuff like that. And in order to bring these 10 people to see the hill they brought an army of cops and they didn't allow anyone to enter the hill in the morning. But we managed to bring some people to be inside the hill and to yell at them and to tell them all our political arguments and we went with them and the cops we did the big turn of all the heel while they were trying to work and we would annoy them and complain and resist. I can also send you some videos of these things that happened the last days.

Today they didn't come, not in the hill or in the square. It's really bad for them what they do also, it's not acceptable to bring an army of cops and close and a hill during very high heat. People should be able to go somewhere. And every day, we have a lot of events in the hill or in the square. We do a lot of assemblies and actions and we take care of the hill. We try to resist. Even in August. August is a dead month in Athens, everybody's away on the islands. So that's why they came now because they know that people will not be here to resist.

**TFSR: Just because it's so hot, right? Like people take the opportunity to get away to places that are cooler, because in a city like that at this time of the year in the Mediterranean, it's just boiling, I would imagine. Yeah?**

**Alex:** Yes. And everybody in the summer goes to islands for vacation. That's how it is and they know that. So, they try to attack now. They don't do it in a time where the whole neighborhood will be here or the schools will be open. In a few days, everything will be a ghost town. Athens will be it ghost town in one week. That's why they are doing it now.

These days, we are organizing a lot. Last week, it was very tense, there was two demos in Exarchia neighborhood. One against a rape incident that happened, and the other one was for the defense of the neighborhood. In both demos, again, an army of cops came and settled everywhere in every street of the neighborhood, and didn't let us protest. We tried to do a demo and break the cops [line] in the feminist demo. But they attacked us two times. So like it's crazy, they didn't let a neighborhood demo against a rape incident to happen. They attacked feminists that were doing that. It's crazy. The next day also, they didn't let us demonstrate. That's their new tactic. So, the repression has been high in the last weeks. And also with the hunger strike of anarchist comrade Giannis Michailidas.

some political event, or some oppression. After an eviction of a squat, after some big event that happens, people always have the feeling and the will to meet all together and organize. That gives the chance also to new people and young comrades to join, without having to meet anyone. You can know anyone and join there and get organized.

Yes, this was also a thing of neighborhoods and the more mass movements in Athens. To me, it's a very important way to organize. It's basically what we do, even if we have an assembly of 15 or 20 people, we would call it openly so anyone can join. For example, when the attack on Strefi Hill happened, when the plans of gentrifying the hill started, the first assembly we did was with 300 people... locals from the neighborhood, leftists, anarchists, from some left political parties, some from more anarchist people, or people from other neighborhoods. It depends what happens. If there is a big event people would gather. Like last week we did an assembly of about 120 people because of the attack on the Exarchia neighborhood.

**TFSR: So within the wider project of gentrification in, for instance, Exarchia, it seems like Strefi is important because it's a wide open space with an amphitheater, as you say, where people can meet for this purpose or simply to enjoy themselves, be in assembly or just to gather in small groups or picnic or whatever. But can you talk about the projects that are slated for Strefi Hill specifically and what threatens to damage that spot?**

**Alex:** It's a very nice hill. It has different parts for different kinds of people. It has a basketball [court] for kids. The whole neighborhood gathers there with their kids with their dogs. It has an open rooftop for people to see the view of Athens and have a beer, it has an amphitheater, it has a playground, it has a taverna, a local restaurant, and different spots for people to hang out. It's also a place where homeless people can sleep at night. It's very used, it's a very lively place, people can do concerts there, theater, do assemblies, do movie projections, they can do whatever they like.

It's also a natural place. There are turtles, a lot of different kinds of birds, cats, a lot of trees. So it combines a lot of nice things. It has been used for organizing, but it has been used also to attack. I would like to say that also, it's also a strategical point. It's at the top of Exarchia, it is the hill of Exarchia, so strategically, it's a very good position.

The hill, of course, like a lot of other public spaces in Greece, are always left out by the municipality. They don't pick up the trash, they don't fix broken lights, they leave it without water, they close the water of the hill. They neglect it with the purpose to go and say, "Ah, look at the hill, the hill is so fucked we have to renew it." But in reality, they left it like that and we pick up the trash and we fix everything.

The plan of the gentrifying the hill, it's made by a huge investment company that will 'adopt' the hill. That's what they say. So the plans of gentrifying it is not only made from the municipality of Athens, but is together with private companies that have a lot of business around Exarchia. They sell and buy huge buildings, they take profit out of it. So it's like a mafia of the mayor, together with these companies and businesses to destroy the place and then take money.

The way that they want to destroy it, they want to make the hill, not a free white space, but a place that can be more familiar with tourists, they will cut trees and plants and will put new ones, but not local ones. They want to put cement or other bad material around to make it more, they say 'accessible,' but in reality, it will be accessible for good shoes and high heels of tourists. It's a big plan with a lot of different things that they want to destroy on the hill. We know, it's very simple to understand that is a bullshit plan.

In the beginning, they wanted to close it also and put cameras and guards. They say they will not do it, they took it back. But of course they can do it in a few years, we don't know. And we have seen how they are gentrifying and doing the same work, that they want to do in Strefi, they do it in some other places and we see the result. It's really not a sustainable result. It's not the result we want. We don't want to destroy the whole hill in order for them to just make money out of it. It will change completely the way that the hill looks, the way that the hill behaves. They will put lights that are from the bottom to the top, like a lot of lights that will create light pollution and will annoy the the animals.

**TFSR: It will also make it difficult for homeless people to be able to sleep, with all the cameras and the lights and everything, right?**

**Alex:** Of course. They want also to make an expensive bar there and expensive restaurants. It's a lot of things that we are opposing. Also, we don't accept anything that is coming from this private company, even if they say it's for our own good.

**TFSR: Can you talk about the metro station that's slated for Exarchia? I know in the past when I've visited, usually I've taken a train to the Polytechnic and then walked or taken a bus or something to get over to Exarchia. I'm sure there's other ways to get there. But if I was ever going to like K\*VOX or something like that. It seems like a massive project to have to open up the street, and dig out a huge space, remove whatever happened to be there, and then put in a huge metro station connected to the other stations. It sounds like the project would not only bring a lot of tourists and business to the newly envisioned Exarchia neighborhood. But in the meantime, it would just further dig out the heart of the neighborhood.**

**Alex:** Exactly. The plan is to make a new metro line in Athens. Magically it's passing from a lot of vital free public spaces of Athens. A lot of squares in different neighborhoods, working class neighborhoods, where migrants or people that cannot afford to go to a bar, they hang out in the squares, and the new metro line is taking over all this public space. And it will last, they say 8 years, we know that in Greek time 8 years is at least 10.

All the other metro stations from this new metro line has started to be built. But in Exarchia it hasn't started yet, because of the resistance of the locals from political groups. It's a very small square and the metro stations in Greece are very big. I don't know how it can fit. I think it's nonsense. You cannot fit the this big metro station in this place. They will have to remove 70 trees to make this. Yes, kill 70 trees, and it will not be possible to bring back trees like that, because of the way that they will have built it with cement and stuff. It will be noise in the heart of the neighborhood for 10 years. We will not have this vital space in the middle of the neighborhood. We know that this is not made for the needs of the people to move, it's made only to destroy the political characteristics of the neighborhood and to bring commercialization and tourism. We think that if the metro station comes, it will be a disaster really. Because it also means that cops will be more and more in the neighborhood.

I just want to mention what happened the last few days. Because now we're in a very, very tense situation. Any day the Metro will start to be built. They publicly said that during August, the metro station and the gentrification of Strefi Hill will start. Since Monday, we were guarding the square with 60 people. Tuesday and yesterday, these two days, a huge army of all kinds of cops came at 7 in the morning in Strefi Hill and brought with them, some of the responsible people of the municipality